



## caddisfly

representative species

Kingdom: Animalia  
Division/Phylum: Arthropoda  
Class: Insecta  
Order: Trichoptera

### Features

Caddisflies undergo complete metamorphosis (egg, larva, pupa, adult). The larva may grow to one inch long, but seldom is longer than one-half inch. It has six hooked legs on the front one-third of the soft, wormlike body. The yellow, brown, or green larva breathes through its body surface or uses abdominal gills. The caddisfly adult is mothlike, brown, and usually nocturnal. Its wings are covered with hairs. The adult has long antennae and two pairs of membranous (thin, pliable) wings that are held over the back like a tent when resting. The hind wings are a little shorter than the front wings. The mouthparts are for sponging.

### Natural History

Caddisfly larvae live in ponds and streams. Some larvae spin silk to make an underwater house while others build and live in a tubelike case of sand, leaves, vegetation, or other small objects, and still others are free-swimming. The larval case provides protection, camouflage, and added weight to help the larva remain in one place in the stream. The larva's

feeding habits depend on the species, with some eating dead plant material, some filter feeding, some eating algae, and some acting as predators. Adults eat mainly liquids. A caddisfly larva may rub its forelegs against its head to make vibrations intended to scare away intruders. The female usually deposits eggs in a gelatinous mass or in strings attached to submerged vegetation or other objects, although some lay their eggs at the surface. The larva molts about five times before entering the pupa stage that lasts about two weeks. Another molt occurs after exiting the pupal case. The adult lives for about two months, mating and depositing eggs along the water's edge during this time. More than 50 species have been collected in Iowa.

### Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

### Iowa Status

common; native

### Iowa Range

statewide

### Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.